1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

The sediment, trees, logs, and the like, brought down by the rivers are deposited at their mouth at the sea, thus forming dangerous sand banks with only a few feet of water, which can be crossed in safety only by vessels of little draft. These openings into the sea, or bars, as they are called, are much safer when the streams flow first into a lagoon, instead of directly into the sea, for in that case the sediment is deposited in the lagoon.

CLIMATE.—The climate of the country is tropical, but it is greatly modified by the configuration of the soil and the prevailing winds. The nights are always cool. The average temperature is about 80° F. (26° C.); the thermometer rarely registers higher than 90° F. (32° C.) or falls below 65° F. (17° C.). January is the coldest month of the year.

The country is not as unhealthy as is generally supposed. The old English authors considered it fairly good, and there is no justification for the bad reputation it has now, not only among Europeans and North Americans but also among the Central Americans inhabiting the highlands of the interior or the Pacific slope. Numerous foreigners have lived in the country many years and have retained their health. Unless one is particularly susceptible to malaria or other tropical diseases, no bad effects are liable to attend a prolonged sojourn in the country, provided proper care is taken.

The cool sea breeze, which blows almost constantly around the lagoons, renders the air fresh and agreeable. During eight months of the year the east trades blow nearly uninterruptedly and greatly modify the effects of the heat, so that the latter is never suffocating. The great difference from our own climate does not consist so much in the higher temperature recorded as in the absence of really cold weather, which contributes so much to the vigor and "pep" of northern people.

From November to February northers may appear on the Nicaraguan coast, but they are not so dangerous to navigation as on the shore of Honduras. During a wet norther the weather is disagreeably cold, but a dry norther is pleasant and invigorating. From the middle of June to the middle of August the Nicaraguan coast is subject to squalls and sudden gusts of wind from the southeast and the south, which are a great danger to seagoing canoes. Revolving storms, commonly called hurricanes, occur occasionally on the coast, but they are never so violent and destructive as in the West Indies or around the Gulf of Mexico.

RAINFALL.—One may practically speak of two dry and two wet seasons on the Mosquito Coast. But these seasons are not well defined; the change from the rainy to the dry period, or vice versa, is not as marked as in the interior of Central America or on the Pacific

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

coast. The rainfall is enormous, especially at San Juan del Norte or Greytown. According to the records of the Nicaragua Canal Co. over 296 inches fell at the latter place in 1890, which makes it perhaps the wettest area in America.

The northeast trade winds, which prevail on the Mosquito Coast, become saturated with moisture as they pass over the Caribbean Sea, which is precipitated as they meet the ranges of hills in the interior. Rarely does it rain, however, the whole day long; heavy showers, accompanied by violent winds, pour down enormous quantities of rain, after which the sun makes its appearance again. During the rainy season entire days may pass without a single drop of rain, while, on the other hand, light showers are frequent during the so-called dry season.

Roughly speaking, north of Rio Patuca the *verano* "summer," or dry season, lasts from the middle of February to the middle of May, and again from the beginning of August to the end of September. The remainder of the year is known as *invierno* "winter," or rainy season. The wettest and most disagreeable month of the year is October. The heavy rains pouring down during this month are known as *chubascos* among the Ladinos; they correspond to the *temporales* of the interior and to the *tapayagües* of the immediate Pacific coast.

South of Rio Patuca the rainy season lasts from May to January, with occasional spells of fair weather in September and sometimes also in October. The heaviest rains occur in June and July and are accompanied by thunder and lightning. These thunderstorms disappear as quickly as they come and give way to bright sunshine. April is the driest month of the year, but it is never free from numerous light showers.

VEGETABLE KINGDOM.—The difference in the rainfall between the two coasts of Central America is manifested in the contrasting aspect of the forests. Under the stimulating influence of the moist climate, which reigns practically throughout the year, the Mosquito Coast maintains an exuberant growth of vegetation and the forests never lose their brilliant evergreen foliage. On the Pacific slope, however, where long periods of drought check vegetative vigor, the forests present during the dry season an autumnal appearance, relieved by green stripes along the rivers. In the latter region may be observed the curious habit, possessed by several unrelated species, of producing flowers and fruits while the tree is entirely leafless.

Immediately along the seashore the soil is sandy and there is little vegetation, but it is partly fitted for pastures owing to the annual overflow of the rivers. Beyond this coastal region extends a strip of swampy land, about 15 to 20 miles wide, which is largely unfit for cultivation and is covered with a dense and impenetrable thicket of

3: Pijoan D-5 (ca. 1945) 1946
SA15 Mosquito SA15

The Miskito Indians, numbering about 20,000, are a mixed race, since there has been much inter-marrying with negroes, creoles, Spaniards, Caribs, Sumu, Syrians and Chinese. About one-half of them have negroid physical characteristics, another third non-specific physical features and a few appear to be of pure Indian blood. There is, however, the same behavior pattern in all of them; they live together and there is no cultural differentiation on a physical basis. The culture and language are predominantly Indian, though some of them speak a little English or Spanish. The name "Mosquito Coast" may have been derived from the Indian tribe, the Miskito, or it may have been derived from the numerous mosquitoes found in the area.

The climate is humid and tropical. The average temperature along the seacoast rarely registers below 65° F. or above 90° F. Such pleasant temperatures are due to the trade winds that blow fairly steadily for about seven months of the year. From Bilwas Karma inland, the heat is intense, humid, and at times unbearable. At higher altitudes near the headwaters of the Coco (or Wanks) River, conditions are less severe. The whole area is well watered by many streams which empty into the larger rivers, which in turn drain into the Caribbean sea. In the jungle area these rivers are the only means of communication or transport. During flood times the rivers rise tremendously, often as much as thirty feet in a single night, the crumbling banks bringing down trees and everything along the edge. For this reason the villages are built high up on the banks and usually some distance from the stream. The average rainfall is reported to vary from 250 to 320 inches a year. There are two dry and two set seasons each year, but these conditions are only relative, since it is always humid in the interior. The dryest seasons are from about March to May and from late August to early October. The remainder of the time it rains almost incessantly, sometimes all day. In the dry season light showers occur frequently. These geophysical conditions contribute significantly to the food-agricultural status of the people.

Geographically the area can be divided as follows: along the seashore it is sandy, with an inland belt of about twenty miles, consisting of swamps; then an area fifty to one hundred miles wide of intermittent savannah, and finally the thick, dense, somewhat impenetrable jungle which covers everything, even the mountains. Violent winds and hurricanes are not infrequent.

Besides the Miskito and the Sumu, two other Indian tribes, the Paya and the Rama, live in eastern Nicaragua. The population of these tribes is unknown, but it is considered to be about 500. Conzemius[1] reported in 1932 that they numbered about 700 but stated that they